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would suppose that the prophet had stood on Mount Calvary, and not that he had lived seven hundred years before that time.

The lives of representative men under the Old Covenant show the power of these great principles of Israel's faith. Their grandest expression we find in the Psalms: these are the finest exposition in word and spirit of the central truths that filled the heart of the faithful. And here it is that we hear the Gospel of sin, repentance, faith, and grace, uttered in such clear tones that none can mistake their meaning. These sacred songs show, as indeed the whole Old Testament does, that there was a Christianity before Christ, and that there were Christians before the day of Pentecost. There is indeed a difference between the two Testaments, but it is one of degree rather than of kind. They both describe the gradual unfolding in history and in the hearts of men of the great truths of salvation: the one describing this growth in its preparatory stage, and in a manner suitable to this stage; the other pictures it in its fullness and splendor after the Word had become flesh.

THE REVISED PSALTER.

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III.

Psalm LVIII., 1.—Instead of "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?" the Revisers give us "Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?" Judges seem to be addressed. The word 'ēlēm, which is in dispute, means, with its present Massoretic pointing, "dumbness" or "silence," and is employed as an adverbial accusative. The AV., on the other hand, following Kimḥi, and some other late scholars, derived the word from another root, 'ālām to bind, and gave it here the meaning of "congregation." It is otherwise unheard of in this sense, and it finds no support in the context. Another pointing, preferred, as the margin shows, by some, would make the word a plural of 'ēl, defectively written and meaning "gods," that is "judges." Cf. Exod. XXI., 6; XXII., 7, 8; Ps. LXXXII.¹ Verses 8, 9, 10: There has been a general reconstruction at this point, and greatly to the advantage of clearness and pertinency in the thought. The old version reads in the last member of verse 9, for example, "He shall take them away [that is, the wicked] as with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath." But the point of view of the writer is totally misapprehended. He is simply using the figure with which he began. One is supposed to be cooking his food in the open field. He has collected together a quantity of thorn-bushes, some dry, others green. Suddenly, before the fire is fairly started, a whirlwind arises and sweeps away the whole, fire and fuel alike. So he says, "Before your pots can feel the thorns, He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike" (RV.).

¹ It seems hardly reasonable to suppose that a psalm would start off with such a subtle sarcasm in the first line as the Reviser's would have us believe. The context, moreover, requires a more definite indication of the class of persons addressed. Hence it appears advisable, in this case, with Ewald, Delitzsch and others, to reject the Massoretic pointing, and adopt the one last considered.

— Ps. LX., 7.—AV., “Judah is my lawgiver” (RV., “my scepter”). The thought is apparently based on Gen. XLIX., 10, and Num. XXI., 18, and not on Deut. XXXIII., 21 (cf. Isa., XXXIII., 22) where the rendering “lawgiver” is required. And in the former passages the parallelism demands the rendering “scepter,” or “ruler’s staff.” The same is true of Ps. CVIII., 8. Verse 9: By paying due regard to the tenses found in the original, the question which the Psalmist asks finds its answer in a second question: “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who hath led (AV., “will lead”) unto Edom?” The meaning seems to be that He who had led them as far as Edom would crown with success the still greater enterprise now before them.

Ps. LXII., 3.—The figure of the bowing wall is one of the most striking to be found in the Old Testament. It is important to know to whom it applies. The AV. fell into the natural mistake of applying it to the wicked persecutors, but with great damage to the construction and the real thought: “How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain, all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.*” The tangle, after so long a time, has been straightened out as follows:

“How long will ye set upon a man,
That ye may slay *him*, all of you,
Like a bowing wall, like a tottering fence?”

They are all rushing together against a poor man who is nearly falling, that they may throw him down completely and beyond recovery. Verse 9: The Revisers of 1611 seem not to have taken account of the fact that, in Hebrew, an infinitive may be used for the finite verb in the future. Hence, they render awkwardly, “To be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.” More properly it would be, “In the balances they will go up; They are together lighter than vanity” (RV.).

Ps. LXIII., 2, 3.—The inspired poet is made to say that his soul thirsteth for God, to see his power and glory as he had seen them in the sanctuary (AV.). The desire is a worthy one, and one that might be expected from a devoted Israelite temporarily shut out from accustomed religious privileges. But what he really says is, “My soul thirsteth for thee. . . . So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary, To see thy power and thy glory” (RV.). In other words, excluded from the house of God, he felt that he was not shut out from communion with Him, or from the happy experiences with which he had there been favored.²

Ps. LXIV., 8.—It is not easy to see what could lead a company of scholars at any time to resort to so strange a rendering as “So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.” It was probably less due to reflection and study, than to the example of Kimhi, and others. The proper sense of the passage is that, through the divine providence, the wicked should “be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them.” That is, out of their own mouths they would be condemned.

Ps. LXVIII.—The changes in this psalm are both numerous and important. Verse 4 is transformed almost completely: “Cast up a highway for him that rideth through the deserts; His name is Jah” (AV., “Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah”). The meaning of the verb here is sufficiently estab-

² V. 10: The margin, where “jackals” is suggested in place of “foxes,” seems preferable here, whatever may be thought of some other passages.

lished by such passages as Isa. LVII., 14; LXII., 10; Jer. L., 26; that of the noun, by Deut. XXXIV., 1, 8; Josh. iv., 13; 2 Sam. xv., 28 margin. Verse 6: "He bringeth out those which are bound with chains" (AV.) becomes "He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity." Verse 8: "Sinai itself" (AV.) is less correct and less expressive than "yon Sinai" (RV.), literally "this Sinai." Verse 11: "Great was the company of those that published it" (AV.), more precisely rendered, is "The women that publish the tidings are a great host." The new turn given to the thought, however, has only a general bearing on the question of woman's mission in the church. It is simply implied that she will enjoy such a participation in Israel's future victories as had been enjoyed by a Miriam and a Deborah in the past. Verse 13: Rabbinical precedent here again led the fathers seriously astray. "Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold*" (AV.). "Will ye lie among the sheepfolds, *As the wings of a dove covered with silver, And her pinions with yellow gold?*" (RV.). On the meaning of the word rendered by the Revisers "sheepfold," see Gen. XLIX., 14. In the old version the passage is in the form of a promise; in the new, in the form of a question and a challenge. Would they be content with their ordinary pastoral occupations when Jehovah was summoning them to the pursuit of their vanquished foes? The next verse is in a similar strain, and seems to have been equally misunderstood: "When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white* as snow in Zalmon" (AV.). "Zalmon," as it should be spelled, is a hill in the neighborhood of Shechem. There is no reason to suppose its snows to be any whiter than those of any other mountain. But it was thickly wooded; and when the snow fell, it lay in great white patches, which appeared all the whiter because of the contrasted background of dark evergreen here and there showing itself. In such a scene the poet saw an image of Israel's foes, scattered about in their shining armor on the dark plain. "When the Almighty scattered kings therein, *It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon*" (RV.). Verse 16: An entirely new direction has been given to the thought, and a glance suffices to show its appropriateness. The old version reads, "Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in.*" Zion is meant. The hills around it, some of them much more imposing, are represented as leaping because God has chosen it for his habitation. Leaping is generally a sign of joy. But the context would lead us to expect something quite different from expressions of joy. And the verb rendered "leap," found only here in Hebrew, if the analogy of an allied root in Arabic be followed, would give the meaning "watch jealously," "look askance." Most of the old versions have led the way in adopting this sense for it. Hence the Revision: "Why look ye askance, ye high mountains, At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?" Verse 18: "Thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for the rebellious also*" (AV.). This translation appears to have been colored by the interpretation which Paul puts upon the passage, and the use he makes of it in Eph. iv., 8. The Revisers have properly sought to bring out the sense of the original Hebrew: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led *thy* captivity captive; thou hast received gifts among men, Yea, *among* the rebellious also." The greatness of Jehovah's victory is seen by the train of captives following him, and by the number of his tributaries, some of whom had before been rebellious.³ Verse 19: We might regret the loss of

³ The expression "led captivity captive" is ambiguous, and the ambiguity is not removed by inserting *thy* before "captivity." The meaning simply is that a band of captives was led away.

so inspiring and comforting a text as "Blessed *be* the Lord *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*" (AV.), if the numerous words in italics did not lead us to distrust the rendering, and did we not get, in return, a still more delightful text without a single italicized word in it: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, Even the God who is our salvation" (RV.). Verse 26: "Bless ye God.....from the fountain of Israel" (AV.) has become "Bless ye God.....*ye that are* of the fountain of Israel." In the former case, Zion seems to be regarded as the "fountain of Israel." But the next verse shows that the patriarch Jacob is meant (cf. Isa. XLVIII., 1; LI., 1 seq.), since it is his sons who are summoned to praise. Verse 30: "Rebuke the company of spearmen.....*till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver" (AV.). So far-fetched a rendering for *hăyyāth qānēh* as "company of spearmen" would hardly have suggested itself to a practical mind of the present generation. It is due to the refinements of an Aben Ezra and a Kimhi. It means "wild beast of the reed," and is a symbol of Egypt. The second clause is more difficult; but the Revisers appear to be in harmony with the grammar and lexicon in referring the word rendered "submit himself" (RV., "trampling") to God, and so giving to the whole the sense: "Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds....trampling under foot the pieces of silver." They bring bars of silver, but with unsubmitive hearts. Hence, God tramples on their worthless gifts.⁴ Verse 31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (AV.) is a rendering liable to serious misconstruction. It is nothing that is to occur. It is already in process, at the time indicated by the Psalmist, and he says, "Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God" (RV.), or still more literally, "Cush shall run, his hands towards (or, unto) God."

Ps. LXX., 3: "Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame" (AV.). Shame is used in the sense of shamelessness, and its usual meaning is not given to the accompanying preposition, which, literally translated, would be "on the heels of." Assigning their normal value, consequently, to the original Hebrew words, the Revisers get, "Let them be turned back by reason of their shame," which is a very different sentiment.

Ps. LXXI., 16.—According to the AV., it should read, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God;" according to the RV., "I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord God." If the ordinary meaning of the words employed, and the force of the context, are to be considered, the latter is much to be preferred.

Ps. LXXII., 8: "And from the River unto the ends of the earth" (RV.). The change consists simply in beginning the word river with a capital, and so showing a proper deference to the original promise in Exod. XXIII., 31, and to the Euphrates itself, which is often spoken of in the Old Testament as "the River." Verse 15: At least two-thirds of the Revisers have expressed an opinion in favor of an alteration from "he shall live" to "they shall live." That is, they make the subject of the clause the persons spoken of just before, and not the king, their deliverer. It is grammatically the easier construction; while to speak of the king as living would be without analogy, and, in the connection, without special pertinence.⁵ Verse 16: "There shall be abundance (AV., an handful) of corn in the earth in

⁴ The word *rippes* is found only here and in Prov. vi., 3. It looks somewhat inconsistent for the Revisers to admit to the text, in the latter passage, that meaning of it which they here relegate to the margin.

⁵ A still better rendering would seem to be: "Let Him live! and let there be given to Him of the gold of Sheba." The first exclamation would thus be equivalent to *Vive le Roi!*

the top of the mountains" (RV.). The mountain tops are not necessarily unproductive, but in the East are often highly cultivated. Misled by the contrary supposition, and governed too little by the context, the earlier interpreters gave a forced meaning to the Hebrew word involved. Although nowhere else found in this form, the root is allied to *pāsāh*, meaning "to spread" (cf. Lev. XIII., 7) from which the meaning of abundance is derived.

We have thus examined the more important changes introduced by the Revisers in the first two books of the Psalter. The impression they as a whole make upon us is extremely favorable. One thing is plain; there has been great conservatism, possibly too much. But it is better so, than that needless changes should be introduced. The conservative spirit every-where manifest will serve at least to awaken confidence among the many who have dreaded to have the old version touched, lest it should lose its sacredness and its charm entirely. Dr. Guthrie wrote, nearly fifteen years ago:⁶

"The expression, 'revision of the Bible,' has, to the ear of a devout but ignorant man, an alarming sound, just because he does not understand that what is proposed is a revision, not of God's Word, but of man's work in connection with God's Word. This whole movement, instead of being dreaded and deplored, should, in our humble judgment, be hailed as a healthy and hopeful sign of the times in which we live,—an indication that the English-speaking people firmly believe the divine inspiration of the written Word, and desire to possess what may in the strictest sense be called the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible."

It was a decidedly ill-tempered and unreasonable objection which was offered by Romanists to the English version of the Bible of 1611, when they said:⁷

"Was their translation good before? Why did they now mend it? Was it not good? Why was it obtruded upon the people?"

The sufficient answer to such a criticism was that there are degrees even in goodness. Of the revisions made before that of 1611, those employed on the last acknowledged (in their preface) that all had been "sound for substance;" but that even "gold shines more brightly when rubbed." "We never thought," say they, "that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one. . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against." The Revisers of our own day have but carried onward to a higher stage the revision of 1611. That one was "sound for substance." But its gold shines the more brightly for the faithful rubbing it has received. Good as it was and has proved itself to be, it has been made better by the conscientious and protracted efforts of Christian scholars that have been anew expended upon it. It doubtless still falls considerably short of containing nothing "justly to be excepted against." But it certainly approaches much nearer that standard than any version that has preceded it, and should be accepted with profound gratitude by the Christian public of England and America.

⁶ *Sunday Magazine*, Jan., 1871.

⁷ Johnson, *An Historical Account of the Several English Translations*, etc., (London, 1730) p. 97.